



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

News Release

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ICE AND LOCAL POLICE JOIN FORCES TO BREAK UP MAJOR DRUG SMUGGLING RINGS

Crackdown leads to seizure of \$1 million worth of methamphetamine

HONOLULU – A fourth major drug trafficking organization suspected of importing and selling more than half of the methamphetamine circulating on the Big Island was dismantled last week in the latest in a series of enforcement actions carried out by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the Hawaii County Police Department (HPD) over the past three months.

Since the investigation began in April 2004, 47 individuals have been arrested and 19 persons – including 7 last week -- have been federally charged with conspiring to distribute methamphetamine. The methamphetamine was purchased from Mexican drug trafficking organizations and imported from Mexico to Hawaii by way of California. The trafficking organizations imported more than 200 pounds of drugs into the State of Hawaii from 2002 through 2005.

“The cross border smuggling of methamphetamine generates millions of dollars in profits for the criminal organizations involved,” said Wayne Wills, special agent-in-charge of ICE investigations in Hawaii. “One of the keys to dismantling these operations is to follow the money trail because greed is what fuels this dangerous trade. That is what our agents did here, and it’s what we’ll continue to do until we put these criminal organizations out of business.”

Court documents indicate that the alleged smugglers used couriers or concealed drugs in vehicles shipped from the United States mainland. In at least one case, the methamphetamine was hidden in the feed compartment of a cattle container shipped to the Big Island.

Searches connected to the ongoing investigation have so far yielded 24 pounds of crystal methamphetamine, with an estimated street value of more than \$1 million. In addition, agents have seized \$430,000 in cash and an assortment of firearms and motor vehicles.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.